DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 330 SO 030 214

TITLE	Oral History in the Secondary School Classroom.
INSTITUTION	Oral History Association, Los Angeles, CA.
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	46p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Oral History Association, 1093 Broxton Ave, #720, Los Angeles, CA 90024 ($5.00).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; Curriculum Design; *History Instruction; Instructional Materials; Learning Strategies; *Local History; *Oral History; Secondary Education; Social History; Social Studies; Student Participation; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Active Learning

ABSTRACT

This document discusses oral history and the use of active learning to make classroom teaching interesting and exciting. Oral history is an effective teaching tool that requires students to become active participants in their own learning process. It invites inquiry, stimulates discussion, and transforms abstract concepts into concrete reality. Accounts of oral history projects and suggestions for using such projects in the classroom are presented. Section 1 describes specific oral history projects and gives the perspectives of both teachers and students. Section 2 provides information for the development of an oral history project in the secondary school classroom. Section 3 includes an interviewee background information form, a legal agreement for the use of collected information, a receipt for borrowed historical documents, and a 17-item bibliography. (NL)

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ORAL HISTORY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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by

Barry A. Lanman and George L. Mehaffy

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Barry A. Lanman and George L. Mehaffy

Jessie L. Embry
Charles Redd Center for Western Studies
Brigham Young University
Series Pamphlet Editor

Oral History Association
1988

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lanman, Barry Allen.
Oral history in the secondary school classroom/by Barry A. Lanman and George L. Mehaffy.
p. cm. — (Pamphlet series/Oral History Association; no. 2)
1. Oral history—Study and teaching (Secondary)—United States. I. Mehaffy, George L. II. Title. III. Series: Pamphlet series (Oral History Association); no. 2.
D16.14.L37 1988
907'.1273—dc19 88-39425
CIP

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Barry A. Lanman received an Ed.D. from Temple University. His dissertation and publications have focused on the use of oral history in the classroom, a methodology he has used with secondary school students for fourteen years. He is currently an administrator for Baltimore Public Schools and Director of the Educational Center for Oral History at Catonsville Community College, Baltimore, Maryland. Chair of the OHA's Committee on Teaching and past president of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region, he has been honored as the educator-historian for 1984 by the National Capital Historical Society.

George Mehaffy is currently director of the School of Teacher Education at San Diego State University. A former high school teacher of history and government, he has written extensively on the use of oral history in classroom settings. He is the co-author of *Oral History: A Guide for Teachers (And Others)* and a member of the OHA Committee on Teaching.

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PREFACE

By the sixth grade, students report social studies is their least favorite subject; English is not far behind. By contrast, they like subjects such as physical education. The message in that set of findings is hardly startling. Students find active involvement far more interesting than passive learning. This pamphlet describes active learning and how that learning can transform the ordinary classroom.

Oral history has been defined as a method of inquiry that seeks to preserve the memories of individuals that shaped or participated in the events of the past. Oral historians interview people to collect their memories of past events. Those memories are then used as an additional source of information to help historians understand previous periods and events. Historians turn to oral history to document those dimensions of history that might otherwise be unrecorded: conversations, feelings, and the otherwise uncollected memories of participants in historical events. A growing number of historical studies employ oral history as a primary source of data.

School classrooms, too, are using oral history as a process to actively involve students. The attraction of oral history as a teaching tool is simple; it works. Oral history makes students active participants, not passive recipients, in the learning process. It invites inquiry, stimulates discussion, and transforms abstract concepts into concrete reality. Throughout the United States, students are engaged in oral history projects, both large and small.

Yet many teachers are reluctant to venture into this new arena, uncertain of the advantages and fearful of the "costs." This publication, part of the Oral History Association's pamphlet series, encourages educators to consider oral history in their teaching. It combines accounts of successful oral history projects with practical, down-to-earth suggestions for the use of oral history in the classroom.

Perhaps the best single spokesperson for classroom oral history is Eliot Wigginton, a teacher in Rabun Gap, Georgia and the founder of Foxfire, the remarkably successful student project that has created bestselling books, videotapes, radio programs, and a Broadway play. That astonishing array of activities is based on the simple premise that students can do marvelous things if we structure our classrooms to allow them to be actively involved in their learning rather than passive recipients. It is particularly appropriate that he provides the introduction for this pamphlet on oral history in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

I remember very distinctly a time not so long ago — the early 1970's in fact — when it was rare to find any projects that involved the collection of oral history narratives being conducted in any elementary or secondary schools. The more common practice then was to have trained university graduate students collect the raw material, have undergraduates transcribe the tapes as part of their training, and have high school students, if they saw the material at all, exposed to it in finished, edited, published form as occasional accompaniment to their published texts.

Looking back on those times from where I stand now, as a public school teacher who has had students collecting and editing folklore and oral history since 1966, I still find it remarkable not only that this activity at the high school level is such a recent development, but also that it is still relatively rare to find our nation's students collecting first person narratives in the context of reasonable well-thought-out programs that have academic validity and substance. That's especially surprising given the fact that every community in this nation is a community of potential sources of information, that access to them is virtually free for the asking, that involving them in the ongoing work of the schools can result in an outpouring of community good will, and that working with them can infuse a passive, distant curriculum with energy and reality and life.

As I work with teachers around the country, the most common objections I hear to involving students in collection projects are, "There's already too much material to cover as it is, and so we can't afford the time," or, "There are too many logistical problems. Our students can't leave school during the school day, and they all have after school jobs or transportation problems," or, "I tried it once. I sent all my students home to talk to a relative and only a few did it and so we stopped," or, "I don't know how."

Though each of the above represents a valid problem, I know from experience that each also is a problem that has easy solutions. The answers are all out there. In part, this pamphlet will suggest some of them. More importantly, however, it will demonstrate that the problems can be overcome by presenting examples of programs that do exist in secondary schools, that do use oral history collecting, and that, as a consequence, do foster student academic gains and often create for those involved indelible, powerful memories and understandings.

Eliot Wigginton

PART 1

ORAL HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Oral history projects exist, indeed flourish, in every part of the United States, exploring their own local communities and offering students the rare opportunity to become involved with their subject matter in an interactive process of learning. Some teachers use oral history to teach specific course content, such as the Depression or World War II. Others use it to develop interpersonal or social skills, as students go out into the community and interview adults. Still others focus on affective education, as students explore the feelings and conflicts experienced by others. The following represent the diversity of approaches, topics, and grade levels. Some projects are large and well known, such as the Foxfire program, while many others operate in relative obscurity, little known outside their own school and community. Some enjoy substantial financial support while others exist on a meager budget. However, all have a talented and creative teacher, not content with the status quo, who with imagination and determination has created a new approach to learning for students.

The Tamiisix Project: Teaching Cultural Heritage and Skills Through Oral History
Aleutian Region School District, The Aleutian Islands
Sherry Spitler, Program Director

The Tamiisix Project, funded by the Indian Education Act, Title IV, serves one non-native and five native villages throughout the Aleutian Islands. It was developed because parents desired to have their children learn more about the history and culture of their ancestors. Students in grades K-12 prepare "cultural resource" books, which include vignettes from interviews about Aleut games, crafts, community events, and local landmarks. They also produce original artwork and photography. According to Spitler, "While developing the book, students are learning new skills as well as improving others. While learning more about their own history and heritage, they are learning how to listen, communicate, write and spell...the list is long!"

The Boyle Heights Project: A Community Oral History Project
Theodore Roosevelt High School
Los Angeles, California
Howard J. Shorr, Teacher

During a one semester elective course, "The History of Boyle Heights," students study their East Los Angeles community within the context of Los Angeles, California, the United States and the world. Critical thinking, creativity, functioning as a collective unit, and analyzing primary and secondary source documents are taught. Students complete a well structured research project, with several drafts, and a final research paper, including footnotes and a bibliography. Traditional and oral sources are used, and topics have focused on themes such as the "Relocation of the Japanese," "1963-1968--The Explosive Era," and the "War on Poverty." Shorr views oral history as a methodology which "gives students a sense of participation in living history and avoids the one-dimensional perspective offered by textbooks...I have found that community history breaks down student indifference. It helps students understand their neighborhood and themselves and gives new meaning to the term 'roots'." He also notes, "In class evaluations, students write of a new understanding and appreciation for their historically rich and diverse community, as well as an increased confidence with their skills of research and writing."

Using Oral History to Teach Remedial Reading
Abraham Clarke High School, Roselle, New Jersey
Nancy Lubarsky, Teacher

In 1985, fourteen remedial reading students were taught reading, writing and communication skills through oral history. Organizations such as the local office on aging and the New Jersey Historical Commission provided training and historical background, while the community senior center provided interviewees. The students concentrated on interviewing people who had witnessed Haley's Comet twice and asked how life had changed during that span of time. Interview summaries were typed on a microcomputer and put in booklet form, "A Glance at the Past, A Glimpse of the Future." Lubarsky stated, "Oral history is especially important for remedial students who may be weak in their reading and writing abilities, but yet may possess strong oral language skills. Students are able to use oral communication as a vehicle to improve both their reading and their writing skills."

A 12th Grade Social Studies Elective: "20th Century America — An Oral History Interpretation"
Plum Senior High School
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Richard A. Williams, Department Chair of Social Studies

This full-year one credit senior elective, offered by Williams for 11 years, covers a wide range of topics and research questions. The course begins with an introduction to the role, methodology, and problems of the historian, and the processes of historical criticism, followed by an intensive unit about oral history and the techniques of interviewing. Then students answer a variety of historical questions, ranging from local history and folklore to family history and controversial issues, such as "Three Mile Island." A final unit involves selecting and studying a

theme relating to a career, hobby, or an historical period. The course strongly emphasizes a working relationship with the local historical society, senior center, and the media. Students are encouraged to enter their projects in Carnegie Mellon History Day and National History Day.

Baltimore County Public Schools' Grade Eight Gifted and Talented Oral History Experience

Phyllis Bailey, Social Studies Coordinator
Neil Kehl and Regina Schwab, Developers and Teachers
Barry A. Lanman, Program Advisor

What is history? What is the role of the historian? Having students develop meaningful answers to these questions is a major curricular objective of the course "America's Past", the grade eight gifted and talented social studies program in the Baltimore County Public School System. The Oral History Experience, a required year long project, has been a useful methodology for accomplishing this objective since 1982. Currently, the program instructs 250 students at 12 G&T centers throughout the county, making this one of the largest classroom oral history projects in the United States. During the course, students assume the role of historians and are challenged to identify questions of historical significance. They are then taught to locate the human and material resources, complete at least two oral history interviews, analyze the data obtained, and formulate answers to their questions. Throughout their research, they struggle with problems such as inconsistency and bias, which all historians face when attempting to interpret primary sources. A detailed instructional guide contains a carefully designed set of lessons, activities, and resource sheets.

Teachers and students evaluate the program so the curriculum can be constantly improved. In their evaluations, teachers have consistently advocated the use of oral history because it encourages the students to develop and practice a number of important research and critical thinking skills, enhances writing and oral communication skills, and reinforces values such as courtesy, compassion, and respect for individual human worth and dignity. The students often praise the Experience because it personalizes history and gives them the realization that history is being constantly made by everyone. While their reasons differ, both teachers and students generally agree that the Oral History Experience is a valuable and memorable part of "America's Past" in Baltimore County.

Videotape "Local People" Used in the Sixth Grade to Teach Hawaiian Immigration History.

Waimea Canyon School, Kauai, Hawaii
Gladyn Okada, Teacher

A sixth grade teacher, Okada supplements study units on culture and heritage by showing her students a video, "Local People." The video, based on a stage play "Local People: An Oral History Experience," tells the story of a Haole (Caucasian) visitor's search for the "real" Hawaii. In her travels, she encounters a diversity of Hawaii's people. Playwright and director Tremaine Tamayose wrote the play from 10,000 pages of oral history transcripts produced by the Oral History Project, University of Hawaii at Manoa. A nonprofessional cast composed of senior citizens and high school students performed in the play and the video taped version. After

watching the video, John Altomare, a student, said, "I learned about the old life and all the troubles and joys the elders of Hawaii put up with. I learned about immigrant problems and why people came to Hawaii. The show told and showed what it was really like then and that's why I liked it."

A "Community Documentary" Writing Project: An Alternative to the Formal Library Term Paper
Concordia Lutheran High School, Fort Wayne, Indiana
Kurt Jordan, Department Chairman of English

Jordon instructs "English Orientation for College," which utilizes a "Community Documentary" writing project designed to provide an alternative to the formal library term paper. After extensive training in research and interviewing, students conduct an investigation on a topic of their own selection in which the community and its people become the primary source of study. The product is presented in the form of a media presentation or a community research paper to an audience of students, parents, and community members. Jordan observed, "Students sensed the vital and relevant quality of their projects....[They] discovered what resources their community really holds for them; they gained respect for true achievement."

The Foxfire Program
Rabun Gap High School, Rabun Gap, Georgia
By Eliot Wigginton

The first interview ever conducted by my students happened in November, 1966, when four of them, one evening after school, tape recorded retired sheriff Luther Rickman telling the story of the robbery of the bank of Clayton by the Zade Sprinkle gang in 1936. That interview appeared in the very first issue of Foxfire magazine, and even though we had intended to publish that magazine only once (moving on, then, to some other project that would also illustrate to my ninth and tenth graders the function of language arts in the real world) the community response was so immediate and so positive that students in two of my English classes have continued to produce the magazine quarterly ever since.

Through the intervening years, using first person narratives they have collected and edited, the rural public high school students in our program have also:

- written nine bestselling volumes in the Foxfire series or books published by Doubleday; five books published by E. P. Dutton; and three books published by Foxfire press.
- filmed and edited a series of television shows broadcast over our local cable television channel, and they have collaborated on a PBS television series produced by Georgia ETV and a series of twelve commercials for JFG coffee.
- produced weekly radio shows and several record albums that utilize recorded interviews.
- collaborated on scripts for several plays, including "Foxfire" which starred Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy and Keith Carradine and ran on Broadway for eight months (and which, starring Hume and Jessica and John Denver, was filmed in our county and was broadcasted as a Hallmark Television special over CBS on Mothers' Day, 1988).

In addition, students frequently gather oral history as part of their work in my college level research paper course and my Appalachian literature course. Oral history, in other words, has infused the language arts curriculum at our school. Where once our students tried to achieve state-mandated grammar and composition objec tives through writing toothless teacher-assigned essays such as "The Meaning of Christmas," now students, no matter what their grade or ability level, have a new option: drafting real writing for real audiences in the real world.

Hundreds of other public school teachers currently help their students — both elementary and secondary — produce magazines like Foxfire; an activity that, for want of a better name, has been called "cultural journalism." The magazines, of which we have hundreds in our archives, are of dramatically uneven quality, but all came out of the same academic impulse. For years now, however, we have been working with teachers to help them understand that the specific kinds of activities Foxfire staff members conduct with students are only a handful of the thousands of options that exist under the broader philosophical umbrella of somehow giving the more narrowly-focused academic agenda genuine meaning and substance.

PROJECT VIGNETTES

Evergreen Park Community High School
Evergreen Park, Illinois

Teacher: Joyce Mistina
Subject Area: Social Science and English

Women's history is taught through a process of independent study. The multidisciplinary approach takes six weeks and culminates during Women's History Week.

Seward Park High School
New York, New York

Teachers: Jessica Siegel-English
Bruce Baskind-Social Studies
Subject Area: Interdisciplinary

A course called "Our Neighborhood: The Lower East Side Experience" uses oral history to study the history and literature of the Lower East Side of New York City. Immigration experiences are also a major focus of this project.

Elk Grove Village School
Elk Grove Village, Illinois

Teacher: Nancy Topp
Subject Area: Social Studies

Grade 7 students work in conjunction with senior centers two to three weeks a year to study a specific theme. The most recent project studies "The Past 40 years of Elk Grove Village."

Stanford High School
Judith Basin County, Montana

Teacher: Judy Vejtasa
Subject: English

Vejtasa's grade 9 English class has researched and mapped 120 historic homestead sites in Judith Basin County by interviewing homesteaders and long term residents. A student published booklet, with handwritten interview transcriptions, was deposited with the Judith Basin Museum and will serve as a source of local historical documentation.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Anne Arundel County, Maryland

Coordinator: Chip Adamonis
Subject: Intermediate Composition

Students throughout the county, enrolled in grade 11 "Intermediate Composition," are required to interview senior citizens about their teenage years. After comparing and contrasting their own experiences with that of their interviewees, students write creative or expository essays that emanate from a central idea, feeling, or fact discovered in the interview.

King Junior High School
Berkley, California

Teacher: Fannie Smith
Subject: Advanced U.S. History

Students interviewed people about their experiences in World War II and produced a xeroxed booklet called "Oral History of World War II."

Baltimore County Public Schools
Baltimore, Maryland

Teacher: Daisey McTighe
Subject Area: Gifted and Talented Art and Photography

Art students use videotaped oral history interviews to complete portrait studies. They use oral history to help teach the units "Portraits in History" and "Recording Societal Changes" by having students create interpretive paintings, drawings, and displays from interviews and project documents produced and collected by the County's history students.

The Center for Studies in English as a Second Language
Boulder High School
Boulder, Colorado

Teacher: Donna H. Lester
Subject Area: English

Oral history helps teacher communication skills in a course called "English as a Second Language." In addition, cross cultural understanding is promoted by having students interview refugees about their immigration experiences. The students publish a magazine called "Worldwinds" on this theme.

Edmunds Middle School
Burlington, Vermont

Teacher: Larry O'Keefe
Subject Area: Journalism

Students in grades 7 and 8 who are enrolled in the Paradise Project Journalism class interview people about their life experiences.

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ORAL HISTORY

"Oral history has been an important part of my teaching program for the past seven years, although initially I viewed it only as a method to collect a local history of the Depression. I have since become impressed by the versatility and the effectiveness of this research tool. Students armed with tape recorders and a genuine desire to learn have gathered insights into the past that are colored by the laughter and tears of the participants. Their view of history has been enriched by seeing textbook facts through the eyes of an individual who has experienced the event."

Patricia Grimmer
Carbondale Community High School
Carbondale, Illinois

"Oral history helps children see the continuity of life...It teaches the similarities in people of different generations and breaks down stereotypes, especially between generations."

Nancy Topp
Elk Grove Village School
Elk Grove Village Illinois

"Oral history causes students to question, think, and analyze. It actively engages students in the study of history and is one of the best teaching tools I have ever used!"

Carol Stumbo
Weelwright High School
Weelwright, Kentucky

"While many teachers and students realize the immediate value of oral history for classroom use, many do not recognize the long-term value of preserving the products of student efforts for future historians and researchers. Classrooms are producing good primary resource materials which merit preservation in our school and community libraries."

Laurie Mercier, Editor
Montana Oral History Association Newsletter
Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 1987, p. 6

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ORAL HISTORY

Plum Senior High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:

"By providing a 'voice for the voiceless', oral history can make contact with minority groups who have been generally ignored through written history. Oral history allows the common person to enter his thoughts and views into history, breaking the cycle of writing history only about the important events and people."

Becky Rolf

"Oral history stresses social aspects instead of just political and economic history." "Oral history creates a 'more fair' interpretation of history by representing the average man and his ideals."

Shelley Diggins

"Oral history is learning by doing."

Kelly McConville

Milford Mill High School, Baltimore County Public Schools, Baltimore, Maryland:

"Oral history is different because it lets the student get thoroughly involved in a particular area. Where an ordinary assignment might only deal with research, oral history encompasses both research and actual execution of ideas. It is an 'action assignment' that allows the student to transform ideas into reality."

Richard Hankin

"I learned that people are more than one-dimensional...I heard both facts and opinions. I realized the reasons why things happened, not just that they happened."

Sharon Taubenfeld

"Oral history linked the future and the past, bringing them together."

Tanya Gadson

"Oral history helped me to understand history by discussing other peoples' backgrounds and making a comparison with my own."

Daryl Collings

"I realized that World War I affected my family the most because of our German background."

Tony Breda

"It helped me understand the human causes, not just 'the war began because'. . . but why it began, who was involved and most importantly — how they felt."

Richard Hankin

PART II

HOW TO DEVELOP AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FOR THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

THE 20 MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FOR THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

This discussion addresses the fundamental steps of planning and implementing a classroom oral history project. The questions are those most frequently asked by teachers while the answers are practical methods and suggestions, which have been field-tested in a variety of academic settings. To be effective, however, these recommendations should be modified to meet the specific needs of your students and your teaching environment.

1. HOW CAN I USE ORAL HISTORY IN MY CLASSROOM AS AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUE?

Oral history is a versatile educational methodology that can promote content instruction, skill development, student motivation, and appreciation of the subject matter. Despite its name, oral history is being used effectively in most secondary school subject areas throughout the United States to accomplish curriculum objectives. Both the processes and products of classroom oral history can serve as an educational tool. However, proper planning and direction are essential to the success of an oral history project. In order to sucessfully implement this instructional technique, read as much as possible about oral history and complete at least one oral history interview before a classroom project is initiated to gain necessary practical experience and help students avoid many of the pitfalls common in beginning projects.

For examples of how oral history can be used as an educational methodology, refer to:

Suggestions for the Student Use of Oral History in a Performance, Presentation, Project, or Research Paper. Page 20

Oral History Topics, Skills, and Methods Which Can be Utilized in Subject Areas Other than Social Studies and English. Page 22

2. HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I DEVOTE TO AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

Oral history projects vary in length, depending on the topic, product, and experience of the students involved. Projects may also be designed to utilize class time and/or be assigned as a long term homework project.

A Two Week Instructional Unit Project:
Week One

Monday	Introduction to the concept of oral history. Examples of oral history tapes are used as motivation. Homework: Assigned readings on oral history.
Tuesday	Oral history instruction. Homework: Assigned readings on how to do an oral history interview.
Wednesday	Instruction in the use of equipment. A mock interview session in class demonstrates and reinforces interview skills. Homework: Additional readings on oral history. Interview topics and people considered.
Thursday	Interview topic selection and research. Homework: Final selection of interviewee(s).
Friday	Interview outlines prepared. More topic research. Homework: Interviews completed over the weekend.

Week Two

Monday and Tuesday	Written and oral assignments on the use of interviews. Tapes analyzed in class. Homework: Oral presentations prepared for Wednesday and Thursday
Wednesday and Thursday	Class discussion and oral presentations completed. Homework: Written assignments completed.
Friday	Test over unit (which covers content and/or skills acquired during the unit.) Projects to be collected for grading.

The two week unit project is effective for easy-to-acquire interviewees and less difficult topics such as the Depression or World War II. One interview is usually assigned and often relates to a specific unit of study, which has been taught or introduced prior to the oral history project.

An Eight to Ten Week Term Project

1 Week	Introduction to the project and the concept of oral history. Topic investigation and selection.
1-2 Weeks	Topic research; selection of interviewee(s), oral history instruction.
2 Weeks	Preliminary and taped interviews completed.
2-3 Weeks	Interview analysis, written project requirements completed.
1-2 Weeks	Oral presentation of finished projects, projects collected for grading.

The term project allows for more in-depth research and analysis and more challenging interview topics than the two week project. Two interviews are often assigned. Media or written products can be completed during other terms.

A Full Year Project

October-November	Introduction to the project and the concept of oral history, topic investigation and selection, oral history instruction.
November-December	In-depth topic research, selection of interviewees.
January-February	Preliminary and taped interviews completed.
March-April	Interview analysis; written project requirements completed; media projects, if required, developed.
May	Oral presentation of final projects, projects collected for grading.

This time frame is designed to give the student the most intensive experience. Up to four interviews are commonly assigned.

3. WHAT RESOURCES WILL I NEED TO BEGIN AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

While many programs operate with the resources contained in the classroom, the following list represents the materials most often required for a major project. If you make your own list of resources and plan for their acquisition before you begin, the project will run more efficiently.

Example List

A. Equipment:
Tape recorders, video equipment, transcribing machines, cameras, and specialized equipment to produce projects such as slide/tape shows.

B. Supplies:
Audio tapes, videotapes, art supplies, film, background research materials, instructional books, example projects.

C. Plans:
Possible interview topics, potential interviewees, organizations that might assist, and list of student objectives and project requirements.

D. Letters and Forms:
Letters to parents and interviewees explaining the program, letters publicizing the project, letters of appreciation, handouts on oral history interviewing, description of student requirements and grading policies, and interview forms such as legal agreements.

4. WHERE CAN I GET THE MONEY FOR AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

Although money is always a concern in planning educational programs, it is not the essential factor in developing an oral history project. Most schools are currently operating quality projects on a "shoe string" budget. The need for actual cash may be reduced by:

A. Having the students use their own tape recorders and when possible, supply their own tapes.

B. Obtaining tape recorders from AV departments or media centers.

C. Borrowing expensive equipment, such as video cameras, from a media lab or central office.

D. Having the business department transcribe students' tapes or have students transcribe their own tapes or having students summarize or index their interviews instead of transcribing.

If an extensive project is planned, the following are creative ways to raise money:

A. Request funds from school organizations such as the PTA.
B. Request funds from the Alumni Association or graduating class.
C. Develop a fund raiser.
D. Seek business and corporate sponsors.
E. Sell ads in a publication.
F. In return for publicity, have retail camera and video shops donate needed equipment.
G. Seek funding from family endowments in your community or state.
H. Seek funding from your system or the state department of education.
I. Seek state humanities or NEH grants. Most states also award mini-grants for sums under a $1,000, which require less demanding proposals.
J. Seek grants from other private or public sources. These organizations can often be identified through your state Comptrollers Office or Chamber of Commerce.

It appears that most projects operate on a budget of less than $500 per year. However, projects that publish or develop media products have a greater need for money, often extending into thousands of dollars per year. If your project has a need to develop a fund raising effort, assign a committee of students (under your direction) to coordinate the effort. In this way, it allows you to concentrate on more academic matters and teaches the students the skills of organization, leadership, and grantsmanship.

5. HOW CAN I GET MY STUDENTS INVOLVED WITH ORAL HISTORY?

Two basic methods involve students with oral history: passive and active oral history instruction. Active oral history instruction engages students in the production of their own oral history interviews and teaches them the research process through direct experience. This project-oriented style of education teaches skills and at the same time produces worthwhile products, which are sometimes published. Passive oral history instruction is the presentation of oral history sources from which students will learn. This is accomplished by integrating "ready-made" sources of oral history into existing curricula. The use of books, media, and student tapes are a few of the resources which can expose a class to this methodology and provide content to an area of study.

6. WHAT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS DO I WANT MY STUDENTS TO COMPLETE?

The educational objectives often determine if the interviews will be biographical (a life review of a single individual) or thematic (a specific event or topic). Interviews can combine both. Another decision is if the assignment will involve family interviews and/or non-family interviews. The types of interviews should be assigned with age, maturity, and student ability level in mind. Remember, the project should be challenging but not a source of frustration. For example, projects about the Holocaust or themes using adult level terminology might be better suited for high school than middle school.

Example Interviews:

"Reminescences: Cy Pick, Jr." An interview with a member of the Tlinght Indians of Southeast Alaska by Poncho Edwards of Great Falls High School, Great Falls, Montana.

"Whamo" A project documenting the Black owned and operated radio station in Pittsburgh by Jarrid Smith of Plum Senior High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

7. WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL ARRANGEMENT IS BEST FOR AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

Three types of organization are most often used in classroom oral history projects:

A. The individual project: This is excellent for self-motivated and highly capable students. However, it requires the student to be proficient with all of the processes and skills of the project. The student is graded on his own work and does not have to rely on other individuals.

B. The small group project (up to four students): This is effective for less confident or able students because it allows each to accept certain responsibilities or parts of the project. It allows highly capable students to "pool" their research. The major problem with this organization is that each member is dependent on the follow-through of the other group members. One way to alleviate this concern is to assign and grade each student on specific responsibilities and tasks of the project.

C. The entire class project: This works well if one major topic is going to be investigated. It is also beneficial for a media presentation or publication. Each student can assume a specific task, such as research, interviewing, script writing, artwork, etc. This allows each student to use his or her area of expertise. However, the student does not get to experience all of the processes of an oral history project. There is the same problem of follow-through that exists with the small group project which can be resolved in the same manner. In a project where a product is being developed on a deadline, a "back-up" person or assistant for each major job might provide a "failsafe" approach for getting all tasks completed accurately and on time. As with any other project, your specific classroom situation and objectives will determinine which organization is most appropriate.

8. HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD I HAVE EACH STUDENT INTERVIEW?

The time devoted to the project is a major factor, but the following suggestions might provide some guidance:

A. For a short-term project: Several "mini-interviews", consisting of a few select questions, give the student the opportunity to compare and contrast information required from the interviews and/or other primary and secondary sources.

B. For a family project: Two to three generations or two to three family members provide different viewpoints and perspectives.

C. For a thematic project: Two interviews often provide sufficient information and differing points of view.

D. For a biographical project: Two interviews often allow the student a chance to improve the skills of interviewing.

E. For a full year project: Four interviews are often possible, providing more extensive exposure to this educational experience.

Note: A mock or practice interview is suggested before the student attempts the "real thing."

9. HOW WILL MY STUDENTS FIND THEIR INTERVIEWEES?

Two "schools of thought" exist on this issue. Some educators compile extensive lists of potential interviewees, while others require students to find their own interview sources. Finding an interview can be one of the objectives of historical investigation. A compromise might be to suggest the best places to look for an interview (senior centers, organizations specializing in the selected theme, etc.) and then let the students try to find their own sources. As back-up for students who have difficulty, have a reserve list of interviewees available. However, don't underestimate the students' ability to find unique and interesting people to interview.

10. WHAT DO I NEED TO TEACH MY STUDENTS BEFORE I SEND THEM ON AN INTERVIEW?

Most teachers cover the following topics before they send students on an interview:

A. The background and purpose of oral history
B. The techniques of oral history interviewing and question development
C. The methods of finding oral history interviewees
D. The methods of researching a topic
E. An in-depth review of the topic being studied
F. Interview paperwork and documents
G. The use of equipment
H. How to recognize and collect supplementary documents, and photographs

11. WHAT ARE THE STEPS MY STUDENTS SHOULD FOLLOW IN ORDER TO COMPLETE A SUCCESSFUL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW?

The following steps have been successful in guiding students through the processes of creating an oral history interview:

A. Identify a general topic in which you have an interest. Try not to select an over-researched topic or one that is too difficult. World War II, for example, is often a good topic.
B. Consider several subtopics relating to the general topic. e.g. The attack on Pearl Harbor, D-Day, the homefront, etc.
C. Focus on one specific aspect of the general topic such as the social, economic, political, esthetic or philosophical aspects of the general topic. e.g. The role of women in industry during World War II.
D. If the oral history process and/or product are to be completed by a group, assign individual responsibilities.
E. Survey the community, educational institutions, libraries, etc. to see if appropriate research information is available. If it is not available, select another interview focus.
F. Conduct initial research using traditional primary and secondary sources which include articles, books, newspapers, pamphlets, pictures, charts, graphs, documents and artifacts.

G. Develop an initial question outline based on the research. At the same time, become familiar with the processes of interviewing and the operation of the tape recorder.

H. Find several candidates to interview. Select the interviewee(s) that will contribute the most to the research. e.g. Interview a person who experienced the attack on Pearl Harbor rather than a person who has only secondary knowledge of the event.

I. Schedule and complete a preliminary interview with the selected interviewee(s). While many projects do not have the time to do this, a preliminary interview can help produce a high quality interview. This is conducted without a tape recorder and is designed to:
   1. Introduce yourself and build rapport with the interviewee.
   2. Share information about the purpose of the interview.
   3. Share information about the topics to be discussed in the interview.
   4. Expand awareness of subtopics relating to the interview focus which were previously unknown to you.
   5. Determine if the individual has the information you need.
   6. Have the individual fill out the Interviewee Background Information form which will assist your research and the development of your final question outline.
   7. Ask the individual if they have any documents, artifacts or pictures, etc. which would assist the interview and your research. If you borrow any documents, complete the Receipt for Borrowed Historical Documents form.
   8. Ask the individual if they know other people who might have knowledge about your interview focus. The preliminary interview is not a necessity and may not be practical for short term projects or interviews involving extended distances. However, the student who completes a preliminary interview is usually better prepared for the actual interview than the student who skips this process.

J. Continue to research traditional sources in order to increase knowledge of the interview focus.

K. Develop a final question outline.

L. Set an interview date.

M. Conduct the interview.

N. If the tape is not going to be transcribed, have the interviewee sign a legal agreement at the conclusion of the interview process. However, if the tape is going to be transcribed, have the interviewee sign a legal agreement after the transcript has been approved by the interviewee. (The legal agreement should conclude the formal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.)

O. Tape an interview introduction and label the tape(s).

P. Write a thank you note to the interviewee.

Q. To make the oral history interview more usable, the oral history tape may be:
   1. Summarized in narrative form.
   2. Summarized in 5-10 minute segments of time using a wrist watch.
   3. Indexed by subject/topic using a wristwatch.
   4. Indexed by subject/topic using the recorder's counter.
   5. Transcribed (A word for word account of what was said in the interview).

Note: The oral history interview is now ready to be used in a product (an historical paper, project, performance, media presentation or publication) or as an instructional tool.

12. WHAT SHOULD I TEACH MY STUDENTS ABOUT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING?

Teaching students how to complete a successful oral history interview is one of the most important aspects of the oral history process. It can be accomplished through lecture, class discussions, readings, example tapes, mock interviews in front of the class, and practice interviews. In most cases, there is a direct correlation between student preparation for the interview and the quality of the completed interview. The time is well spent and can provide the student with a skill that will last long after the immediate project has been completed.

For an outline of instructional suggestions on interviewing techniques, refer to the section "How To Help Students Conduct A Successful Oral History Interview." Page 25

13. WHAT FORMS AND LEGAL AGREEMENTS WILL I NEED TO ESTABLISH AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

Depending on the extent of your project, the following forms may be necessary:

A. A check list for student progress
B. Interview summary and index forms
C. An interviewer background information form
D. A question outline form
E. A catalog card for the project, if it is to be saved in a collection
F. Evaluation forms
G. Legal agreements. While many schools do not use them, if your objectives include a media presentation or publication, a legal agreement, signed by the interviewee and interviewer, may become important at a later date.

A pocket folder can be used to hold the parts of the finished project. The tape(s) may also be put in the pocket. (This makes grading the projects much easier.)

Note: Some example forms are shown in Figures 1-3 at the back of this pamphlet.

14. WHAT TYPES OF PRODUCTS CAN I HAVE MY STUDENTS DEVELOP FROM AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW?

The following products can be developed from a single interview or from several interviews:

A. An audio or video taped interview
B. A transcript of the interview
C. An interview summary by time or lap counter
D. An index of the interview by time or lap counter
E. Interview excerpts and quotes
F. A discussion or oral presentation based on the interview
G. A performance (drama, play, or skit), media presentation project or an historical paper. For additional information, refer to the section "Suggestions For the Student Use of Oral History in a Performance, Presentation, Project, or Research Paper." Page 20

H. A newspaper or journal article
I. A script for a radio or cable television show.
Note: Most projects incorporate several of the above.

An Example Product:
"The Baltimore Air Show of 1910." A twenty-two minute slide/tape show developed by Janet Trencher, Steven Byrd, Annette Citron, et. al. The presentation used interview excerpts and other primary sources to document the third air show in the United States. The project was produced at Milford Mill High School, Baltimore, Maryland.

15. HOW CAN I USE THE STUDENTS' PRODUCTS AS A METHOD OF INSTRUCTION?

Oral history projects from previous years, as well as newly completed projects, are an excellent source of instruction. They can be utilized:
A. To introduce, teach, augment, and reinforce content
B. As a micro-study
C. As a source from which to write factual or creative literature
D. To stimulate a discussion
E. To give students practice in making an oral presentation and/or critiquing presentations
F. As a motivation for other assignments
G. As a source to teach the skills of analysis. Students can compare and contrast their tapes with the tapes of other students. This can be accomplished in pairs, in groups, or by the entire class.
H. To teach the skills of interviewing, both good and bad examples can be used.

16. TO WHOM CAN I HAVE MY STUDENTS PRESENT THEIR ORAL HISTORY PRODUCTS?

The students' finished products may be submitted or presented:
A. In class, to other classes and/or school assemblies
B. To groups of parents or the PTA
C. To community groups and libraries
D. To retirement and nursing homes and senior centers
E. To shopping malls (displays and dramas)
F. To community papers and specialized publications
G. To radio and cable TV stations
H. To professional organizations and special interest groups
I. To museums or other historic organizations
J. To contests, fairs, or other competitions, especially History Day programs

An Example Presentation:
"The Youth Movement: An Age of Conflict." A ten minute drama, produced from 24 interviews, about the violent period of the 1960's in and around Southern Illinois University. The drama was written by David Hartley, Kristen Fligel, Brent Ritzel, Wendy Van Winkle, and Heidi Waring and advised by their teacher, Patricia Grimmer, of Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale, Illinois. The students performed the drama at National History Day and won the first Oral History Award (1986), presented by the Oral History Association's Committee on Teaching.

17. HOW SHOULD I EVALUATE MY STUDENTS' PROGRESS THROUGHOUT THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

There are three basic ways to evaluate students through the process and the development of the product: teacher evaluation, peer evaluation, and self evaluation. Methods of evaluation should be stated at the beginning of the project and should directly correspond to class objectives. A check list of requirements assists the student and teacher in the evaluation process. As the grade level declines, the need for structure, checks, and monitoring increases. Among the areas of evaluation are the skills used and learned throughout the process, including such items as communication, leadership, time management, research, interviewing, and writing skills. The content of the product can be evaluated according to its parts (footnotes, tape labels, etc.) and the student's ability to summarize, analyze and synthesize the material gained in the project. A list of criteria for a peer evaluation may be based on the above items but modified for the students' ability and maturation.

The following set of criteria may also be useful in having the student evaluate his or her own work.

A. Is the interviewee a reliable (dependable and trustworthy) source of information?
B. Did the interviewee have a difficult time remembering the topic under investigation? If so, how did the interviewee's memory influence the interview?
C. Is the factual information in my interview valid (accurate)? Validity of the factual information from an oral history interview can be established by comparing the interviewee's account with the accounts from other primary and secondary sources.
D. Did I ask meaningful questions?
E. Did I ask any questions that influenced the way in which the interviewee responded? Example: "Wouldn't you agree that ...?"
F. Did my interview elicit meaningful information related to the topic under investigation?
G. Did I produce a high quality cassette tape recording and/or videotape?
H. Was the interview a positive experience for the interviewer and the interviewee?
I. Did I use the material from the interview in a constructive and appropriate manner?
J. In what ways was the oral history experience a success? In what ways could it have been improved?

18. HOW WILL I EVALUATE MY CURRENT PROJECT SO THAT I CAN DEVELOP A BETTER PROGRAM IN THE FUTURE?

Several methods of evaluation can be easily accomplished during and after the project:

A. Keep a diary or log of the project's strengths and weaknesses. Note where more structure was needed, ways to improve the training, or where the students needed more assistance, etc.
B. Have the students evaluate the project. Have them explain what they liked, didn't like, and what they felt they learned. The student evaluation can be written or oral and accomplished individually or in a group setting.

C. A review of your goals and objectives can be most helpful in evaluating the project. However, learning opportunities that were not planned but were successful should be noted and incorporated into future assignments.
D. A personal assessment will help determine what you learned and what you need to learn to better implement an oral history project.
E. An assessment of equipment, school support and community support is also helpful in planning a future project.

19. HOW AND WHERE WILL I STORE THE STUDENTS' TAPES AND MATERIALS PRODUCED?

The tapes and materials to be preserved are usually stored in:
A. The school library, a nearby public library, or a local college library.
B. A local historical society, archive, or museum
C. A community center
Before the products are stored, the following items must be considered:
A. A dry and safe place with a moderate temperature
B. A policy for cataloguing and use of tapes
C. The need for copies of tapes and materials

20. HOW CAN I CONVINCE THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION THAT AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IS AN ACADEMICALLY WORTHWHILE ACTIVITY?

Most oral history projects are conducted by individual teachers and are not part of the specified curriculum of the educational system. It is, therefore, necessary to gain administrative support for such an effort, especially if the project involves a significant amount of class time. These suggestions may assist in acquiring administrative approval and support for the project:
A. Present the administration with a detailed written proposal, which includes the stated objectives of the project and methods of evaluation.
B. Demonstrate how the project supports and/or augments the required curriculum.
C. Show how the project teaches skill development.
D. Collect and share research studies and journal articles which explain the rationale for a project of your type.
E. Cite local or national project examples (such as the Foxfire Project).
F. Explain how an oral history project can be used to benefit the school's public relations image.
G. Show how the proposed project can support current educational mandates such as writing across the curriculum and computer literacy.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDENT USE OF ORAL HISTORY IN A PERFORMANCE, PRESENTATION, PROJECT, OR RESEARCH PAPER

While most of the suggestions are curricular ideas that relate to social studies and English, they may also be utilized in other subject areas.

The Use of Oral History In a Performance

Oral testimony may be integrated into the script of a performance by including actual word-for-word accounts and/or summaries of the interviews. It may be used to:

— Present a biographical sketch
— Establish the character of an individual
— Establish the role an individual played in an event
— Present various attitudes about a person or event
— Present a unique insight on an event
— Present a rationale for a person's actions or participation in an event

Oral testimony may be used to "recreate" an event

Example:

Oral testimony from several interviewees who survived the attack on Pearl Harbor may be used as the basis for an entire performance.

Oral history interviews are especially helpful in developing performances because the oral testimony not only provides factual information but also shares the emotions, inflections, style and general character of an individual. This personalized information may assist the student in producing a more realistic and historically accurate performance.

The Use of Oral History in a Media Presentation

Oral history may be used in a media presentation to:

— Give support and validity to other sources
— Provide a major portion of the documentary evidence
— Explain and interpret various pictures and documents
— Present both facts and opinions
— Present various points of view
— Explore conflicts
— Document change
— Document disasters
— Document unique crafts or techniques

Oral testimony may be excerpted as part of the media presentation's sound track or summarized and recorded by the student in the narration. Short quotes and captions, shown visually, are effective in slide-tape shows. Video tape, however, is an excellent medium to capture the sound and visual aspects of an interview involving techniques, crafts or themes that require an in-depth and complex explanation.

The Use of Oral History in a Project

Oral testimony, obtained from an interview may be used to:

— Construct a time line of events.
— Develop a time line to illustrate and document life spans in relation to major events.

— Plot graphs. Example: The cost of food items over several decades
— Construct maps and graphs displaying factual information.
— Construct maps and graphs which demonstrate the varying attitudes of several interviews.
— Construct captions which explain other primary source material.
— Construct captions or quotes which explain photographs and other visual aids.

If no other source of historical documentation exists, oral testimony may be used to build a model, draw a set of plans or reconstruct an historic scene.

The Use of Oral History in a Research Paper

Oral testimony obtained from one or more interviews may be quoted, summarized, and/or analyzed by the student in a research paper. When quoting or summarizing oral testimony, footnotes and bibliographical references are essential to the credibility of the paper. Interviews must be documented in the same way as any other primary or secondary source. In a research paper, students may compare and contrast oral testimony of two or more interviews. This may be accomplished by having students analyze their own tapes or by comparing their tapes to interviews conducted by others. The student interviews may also be compared (and contrasted) to other primary and secondary sources such as newspaper accounts and textbook descriptions.

Oral testimony can be analyzed and used in a research paper to demonstrate:

— Cause and effect.
— Objectivity versus subjectivity.
— Fact versus opinion.
— Reality versus abstraction.
— Attitudes now and then.
  Example:
  People who were alive during World War II can be interviewed about their reactions to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. An analysis can be made between their 1945 and their present day attitudes.
— Experiential and situational differences: How different experiences and situations affected perceptions, attitudes and opinions.
  Example:
  How urban and rural residents perceived the success of Roosevelt's New Deal programs (especially the TVA, CCC and WPA)
— How parents and friends influence the interviewee:
  Example:
  A father's insistence on his son's career in politics or the influence a special teacher had on the interviewee. Was the influence positive or detrimental?
— How the interviewee's political, economic and social status affected his point of view or interpretation of an event.
  Example:
  A Republican's view of Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" Oral testimony can be compared and contrasted to fictional and non-fictional literary works.
  Example:
  John Steinbeck's view of the depression in *The Grapes of Wrath* can be compared and contrasted to the accounts of individuals who actually lived through the hardships of the depression.
— Oral testimony can be compared and contrasted to television perceptions of a given time period.

Example:
"I Love Lucy" vs. a real person's memories of the 1950's.
Example:
"MASH" vs. a real person's memories of the Korean War, the reality of war in general, and the attitudes toward discipline, etc.
Example:
"Laverne and Shirley" or "Happy Days" vs. a person's actual memories of the social life of the 1950's.

ORAL HISTORY TOPICS, SKILLS, AND METHODS WHICH CAN BE UTILIZED IN SUBJECT AREAS OTHER THAN SOCIAL STUDIES AND ENGLISH

REPRESENTATIVE TOPICS

Art

A life review of a local artist
A community event associated with the arts
The changing styles of art over a specific span of time
A videotaped interview which demonstrates how an artistic technique is accomplished

Business and Cooperative Education

The positive and negative aspects of a career
A life review of a local business leader
The history of a local business or industry
The crash of 1929 vs. the crash of 1988: Their impact on business

Drama

How a play is produced and/or performed
A life review of a local playwright
The history and impact of a community theater
The documentation of a unique or special performance

Foreign Language

The foreign perspective of an event involving the United States and a country which utilizes the language under investigation e.g., The German perspective of World War II
Comparing life styles and/or cultures of the United States and the country being studied
How a foreign language is used in a specific career
A life review of an individual who lived in the country under investigation

Home Economics

How the home has changed over the decades
Fashions and styles: How they have changed over the decades
The collection of recipes
A videotaped interview demonstrating home arts and crafts which may soon become archaic

Industrial Arts

How a product is manufactured
An analysis of foreign vs. domestic quality control

A videotaped interview which demonstrates a specialized craft or technique e.g., tool and die making
A videotaped interview of an individual operating on obsolete piece of equipment or demonstrating how a product was produced

Mathematics
The role math played in a period of recent history e.g., The importance of math in the development of the atomic bomb
How math contributed to the development of the computer
The relationship of prices and wages of a particular era or decade
The professional contributions of a local mathematician

Music
A life review of a musician, band, or songwriter
The impact of music on a specific era in recent history
An analysis of today's songs with songs of another era
A videotaped interview of a craftsman making a musical instrument

Photography
The impact of technology on photography
A life review of a photographer
The documentation of new and old photographic techniques
The impact of computerization on photography and/or photographic processing

Physical Education and Health
A specific aspect of sports history or sports medicine
A life review of a local sports personality
The collection of folk remedies
The changing attitudes on health and fitness

Science
A life review of a local inventor or innovator
The impact of a new technology such as lasers or micro-chips
The accomplishments of a local scientist
The documentation of medical history

Speech and Communication
The history of a local television or radio station
An impact of satellites and/or fiber optics on communications
How a community newspaper is published
A life review of a broadcaster or newsreporter

REPRESENTATIVE SKILLS AND METHODS

Art
The painting of an interviewee's portrait and/or the illustration of an event described in an interview
A production of titles and graphics for an oral history media presentation

Business and Cooperative Education
The business management and marketing of an oral history project
The transcription of oral history tapes

Drama

The improvisation of a "skit" from an oral history interview or set of interviews

The writing and production of a play based on oral history interviews

Foreign Language

The conducting of an oral history interview in a foreign language and its translation in English

The presentation of a report based on an interview. The rest of the class can serve as "examiners," who ask the interviewer critical questions about the interview.

Home Economics

The making of period costumes for an oral history presentation

The construction of a kitchen desplay from a by-gone era, as described in an oral history interview

Industrial Arts

The construction of cases and/or portable panels for an oral history display

The construction of a scale model, based on an oral history interview

Mathematics

The production and analysis of charts, graphs, and tables from data acquired through oral history interviews

The extrapolation of trends and/or the calculation of statistics from interview data

Music

The writing and performance of original music for a live or media presentation using oral history interviews

The selection and editing of music for a live or media performance based on oral history interviews

Photography

The reproduction of photographs for an oral history slide show

The production of creative photography for an oral history publication

Physical Education and Health

The production of a cable television show based on interviews with local sports legends

The development of a display at a health or community fair demonstrating how health care has changed, as documented from oral history interviews

Science

The production of a radio show based on interviews with leading community scientists, inventors, and innovators

The scientific analysis of folklore and folk remedies, which were acquired from oral history interviews

Speech and Communications

The use of oral history tapes to analyze the skills of interviewing and to practice the techniques of listening

The analysis of speech patterns, body language, and colloquial sayings from videotaped interviews

Note: These and other topics, skills, and methods can be utilized within the individual subject area or as part of an interdisciplinary project.

ORAL HISTORY AND WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

In addition to the activities already mentioned, the following skills may be presented in an interesting and motivational manner, while supporting the educational mandate of writing across the curriculum.

The educator may have the student:

A. Practice all of the processes of the research paper, including the skills of note-taking, note cards, research and question outlines, footnotes, and bibliographies.
B. Summarize the tape for the main and supporting ideas expressed in the interview.
C. Document the spelling of proper names and unique words used in the interview.
D. Analyze the tape for correct and incorrect use of English grammar.
E. Index, summarize, or transcribe the tape.
F. Develop a creative essay or short story based on the tape.

HOW TO HELP STUDENTS CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

The following suggestions may be helpful in teaching students how to conduct interviews.

A. Before the Interview:
   1. Complete the necessary preparations for the interview as described in Twenty Questions. Page 9
   2. Obtain and practice using a tape recorder.
      a. Use a high quality cassette or reel-to-reel recorder.
      b. If the tapes are going to be excerpted for use as part of a media presentation, avoid the use of a "built in" microphone. An external microphone (with a stand, not hand held) will provide a better sound quality. However, lavalier-type condenser microphones, attached to the lapels of the interviewer and interviewee, will provide the best voice reproduction and the least amount of background noise.
      c. If you use a cassette recorder, a high quality (brand name) tape is recommended. A 60 or 90 minute tape will usually give you fewer problems than a 120 minute tape.
      d. Whenever possible, the recorder should operate on electric current rather than batteries. Practice with the tape recorder so that you can operate it efficiently.
   3. In addition to the tape recorder, be sure to take along:
      a. Blank tape (at least two 60 minute tapes)
      b. Microphone
      c. Extension cord and two-prong adapter
      d. Note pad and pencil
      e. Question outline
      f. Necessary forms
   4. Schedule the interview several days or weeks in advance.
   5. Establish a quiet and appropriate interviewing environment.

6. Leave approximately one minute of blank tape at the beginning for an introduction. Tape the introduction at the conclusion of the interview. In this manner, the introduction will be more representative of the interview.
7. Position the tape recorder and microphone between the interviewer and interviewee. Test the equipment for sound quality and voice levels. (Record the interviewee for approximately thirty seconds to ensure that the equipment is functioning properly).

B. During the interview, consider the following techniques:
1. Try to establish a rapport with the interviewee. Chat informally with the interviewee while setting up the equipment and continue to build a positive relationship throughout the interview.
2. The first question should be general and easy to answer. This will have a tendency to relax the interviewee. e.g. Where were you born? When? Would you briefly explain what your home town was like when you were growing up?.
3. Try to encourage the interviewee to develop, in as much detail as possible, the areas discussed in the interview. Give the interviewee the assurance that you are interested in the interviewee and the topic under investigation.
4. Ask a general question that will stimulate the interviewee to think "historically" about life in the past.
5. Ask one question at a time!
6. Each question should be short and to the point.
7. In a series of questions about one specific topic, easy and non-threatening questions should be asked first. Then work up to the sensitive or difficult questions (emotionally or factually) toward the end of the series of questions. If possible, reserve the most difficult questions for the end of the interview so that additional rapport will establish a sense of trust to handle such discussions.
8. Use a variety of question types:
   a. Open ended questions: Who, what, when, where, how, etc.
      Example: Why did your grandfather come to America?
   b. Close ended questions: Yes or no style questions.
      Example: In what year did your grandfather emigrate from Germany?
   c. The use of questions to obtain objective, subjective and evaluative information.
   d. Questions to clarify: If you do not understand a statement made by the interviewee, ask another to clarify the discussion. e.g. I think I heard you say.... Is that what you meant? Would you please explain in more depth?
9. Keep a moderate pace geared to the interviewee. Allow the interviewee to completely finish a question before another is asked. Don't rush! Don't be afraid of silence, since the person may be thinking of an answer.
10. Have the interviewee discuss and describe:
    a. Places, dates, and ages
    b. Unique terms
    c. The correct spelling of proper names and unique words. This can be accomplished verbally, on tape, or by taking notes during the interview and creating a word/name list after the recording has been completed.
    d. The role the interviewee played in a specific event

e. Personal points of view

11. Have the interviewee explain techniques or crafts in detail. The interviewee might feel the skill is common knowledge, but in fact these skills may be quite rare.
12. Try not to express an opinion. Remain as neutral and unbiased as possible.
13. Do not directly challenge the statement of an interviewee. If a contradiction seems apparent, try to clarify or resolve the contradiction. The use of a third party may be helpful in asking a question to establish validity.
    Example: Another interviewee stated that John Smith was the most important person in organizing the civil rights demonstration, not Ken Jones. How do you respond to this interpretation?
14. Be aware of non-verbal aspects of the interview:
    a. Body language
    b. Retain eye contact
    c. Be aware of the interviewee's personality and relate to the person in an appropriate manner.
15. Use documents and pictures to supplement the memory of the interviewee.
16. Follow the prepared question outline. However, if the interviewee discusses an important topic not considered in the outline, you may wish to let the individual continue. If the interviewee is wandering in a non- productive manner, return to the subject at an appropriate pause. Remember to be flexible. The question outline is only a guide.
17. Ask questions so that the interviewee can "paint a picture in words." If there are missing pieces of the picture (like a jigsaw puzzle), ask another question to complete the picture. When there is a complete mental image of the topic, you have done a good job of interviewing. A hundred years from now your efforts might be historically significant!
18. Remember that practical experience is the best way to learn how to interview.
19. In order to account for the effects of fatigue, the total session should not extend beyond 90 minutes. If additional information is needed and the interviewee is willing, stop at a logical point and reschedule another interview session within a few days.
20. Conclude the interview by asking if the interviewee has any additional comments to make concerning the topic.

C. Before leaving the interviewee:

1. If necessary, complete a word/name list (mentioned above).
2. If necessary, clarify any facts or information given during the recording.
3. Inquire about any additional diaries, photographs or other historic materials which the interviewee might have and might allow you to borrow for your project.
4. Complete any paperwork required (the legal agreement, etc.).
5. If necessary, establish a date for a second interview session.
6. Be certain to thank the person for their participation.

D. To conclude the interview process, complete the following at home:

1. Tape an interview introduction. Include the following:
    a. Name of the interviewee
    b. Name of the interviewer
    c. The date of the interview

d. The location of the interview
e. The topic and a short summary of the interview

2. Label the tape(s) with the following information:
   a. Name of the interviewee
   b. Name of the interviewer
   c. The date
   d. The topic of the interview
3. Punch out the tabs on the cassette to prevent the tape from being erased.

Note: Several of the suggestions for this section were adapted and expanded from:

Baum, Willa K. *Oral History for the Local Historical Society.* Revised 2nd ed. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

Lanman, Barry A. *An Analysis of Traditional and Oral History Teaching Methods in a High School Immigration and Black History Curriculum.* Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984.

Shumway, Gary L. and Hartley, William G. *An Oral History Primer.* Salt Lake: Primer Publications, 1973.

PART III

RESOURCES FOR THE USE OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Figure I

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: _____ M/F_____

Address: _____

Phone number(s):_____

Approximate age or date of birth: _____

Mother's Name:_____

Father's Name:_____

Places lived and when:_____

_____

Education: _____

Religion: _____

Business, political and social memberships (past and present) _____

_____

Present occupation: _____

Former occupations: _____

Special Skills: _____

Major Accomplishments:_____

_____

National Events in which interviewee has participated: _____

_____

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: _____

_____

National born U.S. citizen? Yes/No

Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date:_____

Country from which he/she emigrated: _____

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee:

_____

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview:_____

Additional information: _____

Figure 2

RECEIPT FOR BORROWED HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Lender: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Borrower: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Materials borrowed: _____

_____

_____

_____

Conditions for use: _____

Date when materials should be returned: _____

Date: _____ _____

Lender

_____

Borrower

Date materials were returned: _____

_____

Lender

_____

Borrower

Note: Make a copy for each party involved.

Figure 3

LEGAL AGREEMENT

I, _____, (name of donor) of _____ (address), City of _____ County of _____, State of _____, hereby give, convey, and assign to _____, which is currently in possession of my oral memoir consisting of _____to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that _____will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as they see fit and that by this conveyance I relinquish:

1) All legal title and literary property rights which I have or may be deemed to have in said work.

2) All my right, title and interest in copyright which I have or may be deemed to have in said work and more particularly the exclusive rights of reproduction, distribution, preparation of derivative works, public performance and display.

I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir. The only conditions which I place on this unrestricted gift are:

1)

2)

3)

I, _____, (as agent for or as the duly appointed representative of) _____ accept the oral memoirs of _____ for inclusion in the _____.

Dated _____, 19_____.

_____ _____

(Signature) (Signature)

AN INTRODUCTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Appendix A

ETHICAL AND LEGAL GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ORAL HISTORY AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

Guidelines for Educators

The educator should:

1. Become knowledgeable with the literature, techniques and processes of oral history, so that the best possible instruction can be presented to the student.
2. Work with other professionals and organizations to provide the best possible oral history experience for students.
3. For those projects that merit preservation, work with other professionals and organizations to preserve and disseminate those collected materials.
4. Be willing to share his or her expertise with other educators, associations and organizations.
5. Follow the "Oral History Evaluation Guidelines" when developing oral history projects.

Guidelines for Students

The student should:

1. Learn as much as possible concerning the techniques and processes or oral history interviewing and the development of research utilizing oral history interviews.
2. Remain as objective and unbiased as possible when researching the topic, during the interview process and during the production of an oral history product.
3. Explain to the interviewee:
   A. The purpose for the interview.
   B. The ways in which you intend to use the interview (in class, in the community and/or as part of a contest entry such as National History Day).
   C. The school which you attend.
4. Treat the interviewee with respect.
5. Respect the interviewee's property.
6. To protect both parties, sign a receipt for any materials borrowed from the interviewee. Have the interviewee sign the receipt when the items are returned. (See the form: Receipt for Borrowed Historical Documents)
7. Have the interviewee sign a legal release for the interview. (See the form: Legal Release)
8. Keep your word concerning any oral or written promises made to the interviewee.
9. Be committed to historical accuracy when researching the topic, during the interview process and during the production of an oral history product.
10. When producing an oral history product, give proper credit (verbal or written) for the oral testimony used.
    Example:
    Written credit: Footnotes and bibliographic references
    Verbal credit: A statement concerning the sources before or after a drama, a live presentation or a media presentation

11. When using the exact words of an interviewee in an oral history product, use quotes and give proper credit (verbal or written) for the oral testimony used.
12. When producing an oral history product, do not use oral testimony out of context. This is especially important when tape excerpts and quotes are used.
13. Inform the interviewees of any public presentations utilizing information from their oral history interviews (most interviewees will be honored to attend and or participate in such affairs).

Note: For a more in-depth understanding of the ethical and legal aspects of oral history interviewing, consult *Oral History Evaluation Guidelines* published by the Oral History Association in 1980.

Prepared with the assistance of Richard A. Williams, Plum Senior High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (member of the OHA's Committee on Teaching)

Appendix B

A NATIONAL SURVEY ON ORAL HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM.

A national survey, conducted by the Oral History Association's Committee on Teaching, measured the current status of oral history in the classroom. Over 3,000 surveys were sent to schools, colleges, and universities between December 1985 and May, 1987. Of the 302 responses, 155 were from colleges and universities while 147 were from grades K-12. Secondary school classrooms (6-12) accounted for 113 of the 147 K-12 responses. Secondary teachers, therefore, represented 37% of the total survey. The secondary school data is summarized below:

— Classroom oral history projects are being conducted in 32 states.
— The states with the most classroom oral history projects are: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Texas.
— 55% of the teachers using oral history in their classrooms are female.
— 54% of the classroom oral history is being conducted in high schools, 30% in middle schools, while 16% of the projects are combined programs ranging from grades 6-12.
— 11% of secondary teachers using oral history also teach it in workshops, adult education and/or college courses.
— The five most common themes of secondary oral history projects are: Family history, Local history, Recent U. S. history (1920's to the present), biographical interviews and cultural/social history topics.
— In 50% of the classroom oral history projects, the technique accounts for 10-20% of class time.

Subject Areas in Which Oral History is Being Utilized

— 60% of the projects are completed in history and social studies classes.
— 21% are completed in English and journalism classes
— 10% of the projects are done in the balance of the subject areas.
— 5% are completed in art classes.
— 4% are conducted through the school library.

How Oral History is Used in the Classroom

— 31% of the projects use oral history to motivate students.
— 26% of the projects use oral history to teach research methods.
— 23% of the projects use oral history to teach skills.
— 20% of the projects use oral history to teach content.
(Note: Most teachers responded to more than one category.)

Curricular Structure of Classroom Oral History

— 74% of the projects are done by individual teachers.
— 14% of the projects are interdepartmental.
— 12% of the projects are interdisciplinary.

Academic and Economic Support for an Oral History Project

— 40% of the oral history projects receive very little or no support from their school.
— 35% receive academic and economic support.
— 21% receive only academic support.
— 4% receive only economic support.

Teachers' Experience with Oral History

— 4% had 16 or more years experience.
— 13% had 11-15 years experience.
— 22% had 6-10 years experience.
— 42% had 2-5 years experience.
— 19% had 1 or less year of experience.

How Student Projects Are Utilized When Completed

— 23% of the projects return the materials to the student.
— 18% place them in a school or library collection.
— 18% use them for instructional purposes.
— 15% are used in literary publications.
— 11% are used in media presentations.
— 10% are placed in archives.
— 5% are used in a variety of other ways.

The Most Significant Educational Benefit From the Use of Oral History

— 23% of the teachers said it gives students personal insights and experiences.
— 15% said it is highly effective in developing skills.
— 13% said it gives the student "hands on" experience and participation.
— 11% said it gives the student an appreciation for people and the subject.
— 9% said it develops student interest.
— 29% accounted for seven other answers which ranged from motivation and content instruction to personal relationships and confidence.

The Most Significant Obstacle in the Classroom Use of Oral History

— 67% of the teachers said time and scheduling problems.
— 10% said funding.
— 9% accounted for answers such as equipment, materials and transcribing the tapes.
— 5% said the lack of student experience.
— 5% said the lack of administrative support.
— 4% said the fear of a new assignment.

Services Educators Would Like Offered to Assist the Classroom Use of Oral History

— 32% of the teachers said quality curriculum materials, books, and articles on classroom oral history.
— 25% said training for themselves and their students.
— 17% said AV materials and example projects.
— 11% said information on video equipment and making video tapes
— 8% said information on sources of funding
— 7% accounted for answers such as the need for consultants and ways to publicize their projects.

A special thanks to Ruth Zurwitz for her assistance in the analysis of this survey.

THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION'S COMMITTEE ON TEACHING

The Oral History Association's Committee on Teaching was established in 1985 to promote, organize and assist the responsible use of oral history in education. The committee has established its national headquarters at the Educational Center for Oral History, located on the campus of Catonsville Community College. The committee and center are available to answer your questions and concerns about the educational use of oral history. For assistance please contact:

Barry A. Lanman
The Educational Center for Oral History
Catonsville Community College
800 S. Rolling Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21228
(301) 455-4207

Membership in the Oral History Association

Students, teachers and other interested individuals are invited to join the Oral History Association. Students receive a discounted rate. Members of OHA receive the *Oral History Review* and the *OHA Newsletter*. For further information, contact:

Richard Smith, Executive Secretary
Oral History Association
1093 Broxton Avenue #720
Los Angeles, California 90024

ORAL HISTORY
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